

SAINT CATHERINE OF SIENA

*// is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you. So say I : it was expedient that I should go away from you, in order that you should set yourselves to seeking God in truth, and not with any intermediary. I tell you that you will fare better now than before, if you enter into yourselves to think upon the words and the teaching that has been given you, and in this way you will receive the fulness of the grace of God."*¹ In these letters, there are constant references to the love of Mary Magdalene for her Divine Master, and it is fitting that the one memorial of Catherine in Lucca to-day should be the great picture by Fra Bartolommeo della Porta, which represents the Magdalene and Catherine together in ecstatic adoration of the sovereign mystery of the Christian faith.

We do not know how long Catherine stayed at Lucca. Her mission was to the magistrates of the Republic rather than to the women, and, as soon as she thought she had confirmed them in their resolution of not joining the league, she passed on to Pisa, where her influence over Piero Gambacorti secured the neutrality of that State and a promise that Lucca would be protected by its power, if necessary. She had, apparently, anticipated that her absence from Siena would be a brief one, but she now found it impossible to leave Pisa. " I am afraid," she wrote to Fra Tommaso della Fonte, " that I must obey the orders that have been given me ; for the Archbishop has asked the General for me to remain still some days. Beseech that venerable Spaniard to obtain grace for us that we may not return empty. But, by the grace of God, I do not think I shall return empty." ²

At the end of October, a Florentine citizen renowned for eloquence and patriotism, Donato Barbadori, arrived at Pisa as ambassador from the Commune of Florence, bearing a letter from

¹ Letter 164. (348).

² Letter 139 (106). Cf. Dante, *Par.* xi. 129. I am inclined to think that this *venerabile Spagnuolo* is not Alfonso da Vadaterra (as supposed by the editors of the Letters), but St. Dominic himself, as we find Catherine elsewhere asking Dominicans to invoke his intercession in similar language. Cf. below, p. 319,